By now the steps to be taken in the editing of Elizabethan plays have come to seem fairly routine. The past half century has provided us with the great theoretical pronouncements on the relation of analytical bibliography to textual criticism by McKerrow and Greg, and Professor Bowers' refinements of these, and it has provided us as well with the great model of bibliographical theory put into editorial practice, in the four volumes of Professor Bower's edition of Dekker. Textual bibliography is now at that stage, which overtakes all scholarly disciplines, when, the great formulaic statements having been enunciated in principle and demonstrated in practice, they become accessible to a wide range of literary students who set about applying them in ways that lack the sensitivity, the discretion, and the rigor that characterized the work of the scholars who defined the discipline. In the wide domain of literary scholarship, one may hesitate to use the word "popular" about any feature of textual bibliography, and yet it is bidding fair to become popular in the worst sense of the word.

The very clarity with which its principles have been defined, and the ordered precision by means of which bibliographical principles issue in the textual authority of Professor Bowers' Dekker or the Illinois Chapman or Professor Evans' Cartwright seems, ironically, to encourage imitation, presumably because the models to follow are so clear and it all looks so easy. Anyone can do it, and it sometimes appears as if everyone is. By now the bloom is somewhat faded on what, in the early 1950s, was hailed as the new bibliography, and for much the same reasons that caused the new criticism of the 1940s eventually to wither. In both cases, delicate techniques of investigation capable in the right hands of yielding insights of a finely grounded subtlety become, in the wrong hands, not so much dangerous as ludicrous. The threat that bibliography may disappear "into its own minutiae" has recently been pointed to by one of its most knowing students, D. F. McKenzie; and the spectacle of bibliographers tracing broken type pieces through the printed formes of a book is finally as unedifying as that of literary critics relentlessly hooking up image patterns from one end of a text to the other. The point is that the recurrence of distinctive type pieces can yield important bibliographical evidence, as Hinman has shown in his account of the printing of the Shakespeare First Folio, just as the analysis of reiterative imagery can suggest what are often profound critical implications. The problem arises when the investigative technique hardens into a mere routine of scholarly performance, applied without insight and pursued without purpose.

The routine to be followed in editing an Elizabethan play goes like this. Having selected his play, the editor inquires as to how many sixteenth- or seventeenth-century editions it had — an inquiry that is easily answered by consulting Greg's *Bibliography of the English Printed Drama*. If it had more than one edition, he must then determine which is the authoritative one, on which he will base the text of his edition — that is to say, he must determine which of the early editions will serve as his copy-text. Having decided this, he will want to know where copies of the edition to be used as copy-text are to be found (and Greg's *Bibliography* will tell him this, too); for editors of Elizabethan plays have long known that, due to the practice in early printing of correcting errors as the sheets of the book were going through the press, different copies of the same edition may contain variant readings; and since the publication (in 1940) of Greg's account of the variants in the first quarto of *King Lear*, when
167 variant readings are recorded among the twelve extant copies, the need to collate multiple copies of the edition to be used as copy-text in order to detect any press variants has been vivid to textual scholars. The collation of editions subsequent to that used for copy-text will depend on the scope of the textual apparatus accompanying the edition that is being prepared. In a critical old-spelling edition such as the Bowers’ Dekker, or the new Cambridge Beaumont and Fletcher, the historical collation includes all single editions of the play in question through 1700, and all edited texts of the play, included in collected editions of the dramatist, thereafter. This can sometimes be a formidable job. Beaumont and Fletcher’s The Scornful Lady has eleven seventeenth-century editions; Philaster has ten; The Maid’s Tragedy and A King and No King each has nine. In addition to these, the editor of Beaumont and Fletcher must also collate the text of his play in the three eighteenth-century editions of the Dramatic Works (1711, 1750, 1778), and in the two nineteenth-century collected editions (Weber, 1812, and Dyce, 1843); and if his play were included in the unfinished Variorum edition of 1904-12, he must collate that too.

In addition to recording such press-variants as may occur among the extant copies of the edition used as copy-text, and to listing all variant readings that occur between copy-text edition and subsequent editions, the apparatus to a critical old-spelling text must also make clear the nature and extent of editorial intervention in the presentation of the copy-text edition itself. Thus, for example, if the punctuation of the copy-text is totally unsatisfactory at one or more places — unsatisfactory, that is to say, even by the uncertain standards of Elizabethan pointing — the editor will emend it, and he will record his emendation, together with the rejected copy-text punctuation, in a list of so-called “Emendations of Accidentals” that are now a regular feature of the apparatus of all critical old-spelling editions. By “Accidentals” are implied not only punctuation, but also spelling, word division, capitalization, lineation, and all such matters as are related to the typography or the orthography of the printed text, and do not directly affect substantive meaning; thus the distinction, in bibliographical terminology, between variants of accidentals, and substantive variants. There is, admittedly, a grey area in which variants of accidentals do in fact affect meaning. The passage in Hamlet beginning “What a piece of work is a man” (II.ii. 300 ff.) is verbally identical in both the second quarto and folio texts, but the sense of it is altered in important ways, depending on whether editors follow the quarto or folio punctuation. Also, an obvious typographical error can sometimes take on substantive force by changing one word into another, as when an upside-down letter n turns the word lose into lone. Variants such as these are termed semi-substantive and are generally included in the historical collation. Where the copy-text is manifestly corrupt in a substantive reading, then the editor must emend; he may adopt an emendation from some subsequent edition, if an acceptable one is available, or he will introduce an emendation of his own devising. In either case, the fact of the substantive departure from the copy-text is duly noted at the bottom of the text page itself; the note will indicate the source of the emendation, and the rejected reading of the copy-text. If the emendation requires explanation, this is given in a more extended form in the textual notes that form part of the editorial apparatus.

So much for the formal apparatus accompanying the text itself. In editions such as the Bowers’ Dekker or the Cambridge Beaumont and Fletcher, it consists of five parts: (1) footnotes at the bottom of the text page recording substantive departures from the copy-text; (2) textual notes containing extended discussions of emendations and cruxes; (3) a record
of press variants in the copy text; (4) a record of emendations made to the accidentals of the copy-text; (5) an historical collation of subsequent editions (and of any editions prior to the copy-text if the copy-text is not the first). Having compiled all this, however, the editor’s work is by no means done. There remains the very considerable task of writing an introduction to his edition, and the introductory essays to old-spelling editions of Elizabethan plays are exclusively concerned with textual matters. They will set forth the facts about the relation of editions; they will explain the basis for selecting the edition used as copy-text if that edition were not the first one; they will set forth such evidence as there is for assessing the nature of the manuscript from which the copy-text was printed (was it a manuscript in the author’s own hand or a scribal copy; was it a rough draft or was it written out fair, perhaps for use in the theatre as a prompt-book?). Then the editor turns his attention to the treatment of that manuscript — whatever it was — by the printer, and addresses himself to reconstructing the manner in which the printer set his copy in type. There are a number of things which bibliography requires the editor to consider here: (1) How many compositors were employed in setting type for the text? (2) Was the copy set seriatim (i.e., in the actual succession of pages — with page 1 first, page 2 second, and so on through the eight pages of a quarto sheet), or was it set by formes (i.e., in a sequence whereby pages 1, 4, 5, and 8 (constituting the outer formes of a sheet) were set first and sent to the press, and printed off while the inner forme (comprising pages 2, 3, 6, and 7) was being set)? (3) What do the running-titles tell us about the number of formes that were in use, and what does the sequence of these tell us about the order in which the formes went through the press?

The importance of all these essentially bibliographical problems to the editorial problem per se has, I think, come to be badly over-estimated in recent years. I want principally to direct attention to compositorial studies, which more perhaps than any other strictly bibliographical issue has occupied textual scholars over the past quarter of a century. The manner in which the spelling practices of different compositors could leave their mark on a printed text was first suggested, indeed, as long ago as 1920, when Thomas Satchell notes in the Times Literary Supplement (3 June 1920) that orthographically the text of Macbeth in the first Shakespeare folio fell in two distinct divisions, the first characterized by the forms doe and goe, the second by the forms do (or doo) and go. In 1932, E. E. Willoughby, in his pioneer study of the printing of the first Shakespeare folio, followed up the suggestion and found further evidence to demonstrate that two compositors (labeled, for purposes of identification, A and B) shared the work of setting type for other folio plays (e.g., Richard II, Julius Caesar, Hamlet, The Tempest). But he also noted that other folio plays (e.g., A Midsummer Night’s Dream, The Merchant of Venice, Romeo and Juliet) were apparently set by neither A nor B. Willoughby was prefectly correct in suspecting the presence of other compositors in the folio besides A and B. His work has since been in large part superseded by Charlton Hinman’s investigations into the printing and proofreading of the first folio; the number of compositors whose work Hinman has identified in the folio now stands at five (labeled A through E). Whether the number will remain at five is uncertain. It seems the nature of compositors to multiply under scrutiny. R. K. Turner, editing Beaumont and Fletcher’s A King and No King in 1963, found the first quarto (1619) to have been set by two compositors;2 Hans Gabler, writing in the 1971 volume of Studies in Bibliography, finds it to have been the work of at least four.3 In the 1605 quarto of Chapman’s All Fools, G. B. Evans finds three compositors,4 but Professor Akihiro Yamada maintains that there are four.5

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The assumption underlying all efforts at compositor identification has always been that a specific compositor was assigned to work on a specific book; some books bear evidence of having been set by more than one compositor, and it has always been assumed that the reason for assigning more than one workman to a single job of typesetting was to speed up the printing process. It has further been assumed that where more than one compositor is involved in the setting of a book, the stints of typesetting which the different workmen performed were spaced out in some sort of systematic order. Often it has been assumed that different compositors worked simultaneously, compositor A, for example, setting the outer forme of a sheet while compositor B set the inner forme; or compositor A setting the first half of the text while Compositor B set the latter half. Beginning with Hinman's work on the printing of the first Shakespeare folio, a number of highly sophisticated studies have been conducted concerning the sequence in which the formes of a book were set in type and sent to the press; such studies are typically based on the evidence provided by the recurrent patterns of running-titles to be observed through the book, and by the recurrence of identifiable pieces of type from one forme to another. What began as a concern with identifying compositors, which certainly does have a connection with the problem of editing an Elizabethan play, has come to be more and more concerned with problems of the printing process itself, and which have practically nothing to do with the editorial problem. Which is just as well, because in the light of D. F. McKenzie's researches into late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century printing house practices, a good deal of doubt has recently been shed on a number of bibliographical studies of the past ten years which have confidently affirmed that a given play quarto was set by formes because the sequence in which the skeleton formes passed through the press, and the pattern of broken or otherwise identifiable type pieces prove it was.

McKenzie's researches are mainly based on the practices — which can be reconstructed in great detail from the existing account books — that obtained at the Cambridge University Press in the closing years of the seventeenth century and the opening decade of the eighteenth. The period is admittedly a century later than the one that is of greatest concern to students of Elizabethan drama; and it is also possible that conditions in a university printing house were not identical in all ways with those which obtained in a commercial shop in London. Allowing for this, however, the analogy with the Cambridge press remains firm enough to permit of some interesting insights into the way a seventeenth-century printing house actually operated, and as might have been expected, it is not quite the way in which twentieth-century bibliographical scholars have imagined. The Cambridge records are particularly revealing concerning the assumption that in printing a given book, the printing house would set at least one compositor and one press crew to work fairly consistently on it until it was finished. The records make it clear the the Cambridge press worked on a number of different books (sometimes seven or eight) concurrently, and that work on no one of them ever proceeded much beyond three sheets per week. And the records also shed doubt on the assumption that a given compositor or team of compositors would be committed to setting a given book. Here is how McKenzie describes the conditions that certainly obtained at Cambridge, and probably obtained as often as not in more than one London printing house:

Undoubtedly the main considerations determining the allocation of work were simply a compositor's freedom to do it and the availability of type. If a compositor had no other work on hand he would be transferred to any that might be
offering and for which type was available. For normally, even when two or more compositors worked on a book, they did not work together setting sheet and sheet about. What usually happened was that one took over where the other left off and then composed as many sheets as the master found convenient or as other commitments allowed.  

In view of this sort of working arrangements, there is no cause for surprise when, in certain Elizabethan play quartos, the closer one looks the more compositors one finds. All the compositors in the shop may have contributed their bit at one point or another. The problem of compositor identification is vastly complicated, though it still admits of a solution; and having identified a given compositor in one book, it is probably possible to identify his work in other books printed in the same shop, and thus form some notion of the quality of his performance — to judge of the sort of mistakes he was prone to make when setting type from manuscript or printed copy, for example. It has always been the habit of bibliographer to insist on the value of such knowledge to editors, the line being that only when editors know the nature of the lapses to which the compositor or compositors setting their text were prone will they know how freely to emend. I would suggest that there are more practical ways than that of knowing when to emend; and that the time that it would take the editor to seek out and identify the work of his compositor in other books that issued from the same shop might better be spent in studying the works of his author and his author’s contemporaries so that, faced with a textual crux, he will know whether or not a given idiom, a given locution, a given verbal form or phrase has any reasonable claim to authority in the usage of the time. The two alternatives for the use of editorial time are not, of course, mutually exclusive. Ideally, the editor knows about both contemporary verbal idiom and printing house practice, but I presently tend to stress the one over the other, it is because recent editorial practice has tended to occupy itself so exclusively with the bibliographical, and with the bibliographical in its most arid aspects.  

However, they are not all arid. I do not want to be misunderstood on this point. Any editor, especially of an old-spelling edition, has got to know about the printing process that produced his text. Why he must know about this can be conveniently illustrated from the text of Beaumont and Fletcher’s plays which, together with sundry others, I am presently helping to bring out in the new Cambridge edition. Since so many of the plays in the Beaumont and Fletcher canon are products of collaborative authorship, any strongly contrasting pattern of spellings or of verbal or contracted forms that may appear in the original texts naturally suggests the possibility of a contrasting pattern of authorial preferences, and thus might provide evidence for determining the respective shares of the collaborators. But before any assumption about authorship can be made on the basis of such evidence, one must first determine whether in fact the pattern of contrasting preferences points to two different authors or to two different compositors. In editing Beaumont and Fletcher’s comedy *The Scornful Lady* for volume two of the Cambridge edition, I was faced with accounting for the large number of verse passages set as prose in the text of the 1616 quarto (the copy-text). Often in the text verse was set as verse, but often it was not, and so the question: did this reflect a difference in the manuscript behind Q1, which might in turn reflect a difference in authorial practice, or did it reflect the work of two compositors? In fact, it reflects neither. Upon investigation, I found the text of Q1 to have been set almost in its entirety by a single compositor (a second compositor was brought on late in the play, to set sheet H). From various kinds of bibliogra-
phical evidence — including the fact that the printer’s measure was constantly being expanded, throughout the text, to make for a wider line — it is quite evident that the printer was concerned with saving space, and that the compositor who set the body of the text set verse passages as prose when a saving could be affected, and left them as verse when nothing was to be gained by changing them. The prose lineation of verse passages in the play is then entirely the compositor’s doing, and has nothing to do with the authorial division of the play.  

Textual scholarship today is in the ironic position of having succeeded almost too well in its objectives of a quarter of a century ago. Then it was necessary to stress the editor’s need to acquaint himself with the bibliographical factors that had produced his text because, until the pioneering work of McKerrow and Greg, the printing process was so generally ignored by editors. We are now at the place where editors concern themselves with hardly anything else except bibliographical matters. The effect of this is unfortunate in a number of ways. For one thing, it commits the editor of an old-spelling text to the kind of routine account of the printing process that is now de rigueur in textual introductions. Does anyone care to know the order in which the skeleton formes of an Elizabethan play quarto went through the press? I very much doubt it, and I very much doubt that anyone need know it, including the editor. I have yet to see how such bibliographical speculation (and it is speculation, based on assumptions that McKenzie among others has called sharply into question) has contributed any insights at all to the practical work of editing. I would lay it down as a principle that an editor must investigate the printing process that produced his text to the extent that he can estimate the degree of compositorial intervention in the transmission of it. That is all that need be required of him. Further investigation — into the sequence in which the formes were machined, for example, or into type shortages — can be carried on at the editor’s pleasure, but then he has ceased to be an editor and has become a pure bibliographer.

I insist on this distinction at this point, because the work of editing, of textual criticism, is in danger of becoming quite thoroughly bogged down in bibliographical speculation. The plain fact is that the great editorial accomplishments that were envisioned when textual criticism came into its own as a discipline just after the second world war have not been realized. We have Professor Bowers’ Dekker, the Yale Peele, two volumes (out of a projected ten) of a new Beaumont and Fletcher, and half a Chapman, and that is all that we have in the way of critical old-spelling editions of the major Elizabethan dramatists.  

I intentionally set apart the Herford and Simpson Ben Jonson, which in my opinion represents the culmination of an older and altogether more splendid editorial tradition than anything the present one is likely to produce. For we are now in an age of assembly line editions, put together by teams of scholars; I am associated with one of them, the one that is assembling the Beaumont and Fletcher edition, so that I may be permitted to speak both with insight and frankness on this matter. I think that the new Cambridge Beaumont and Fletcher has many virtues but — and I would level the same charge at the Illinois Chapman — editorial coherence is not one of them. In both editions, there is a good deal of variation from the practice of one editor to another; one will emend the accidentals of his copy-text far more freely than another; some are more ready to insert editorial stage directions than others; some have sharper eyes for catching press variants than others. But what is chiefly missing from team-produced editions of this sort is the equal knowledge of all the plays which only the editor who has worked with the text of the entire corpus can have. The knowledge of the whole

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canon is not systematically brought to bear upon the several parts of it, and the sort of evidence that could conceivably be mustered for purposes of emendation or for resolving cruxes without resorting to emendation is never fully utilized. It seems unlikely that Professor Bowers’ accomplishment in editing single-handedly the four volumes of Dekker’s play will be repeated.

There is an inevitability about this, for the bibliographical burdens that editors are being expected to assume are getting more heavy and more onerous. Given the scale of the textual collation and the extent of the bibliographical investigation that is now expected of the editor of an old-spelling text, it is not surprising that few textual scholars are either willing or able to make more than a partial contribution to the editorial projects that are presently under way. The days of Gifford and Dyce, Bullen and Parrott and F. L. Lucas, are gone forever, when a single editor, all by himself, edited the complete works of Beaumont and Fletcher or Middleton or Marston or Chapman or Webster. Since a principal reason why no single modern editor can hope to emulate the accomplishments of these gentlemen is the need imposed on him to carry forth bibliographical investigations which have but a dubious connection with the work of editing, and which make but a negligible contribution to it, I am inclined to have distinctly mixed feelings about the achievement of contemporary textual scholarship. We are producing impeccable texts; but we are setting them forth in a context that could hardly be more desolate. The text of a Beaumont and Fletcher or a Chapman play is introduced to us with a densely documented reconstruction of the printing process that produced its substantive quarto editions, and it goes off trailing pages of historical collation. Since I suspect that no one pays much attention to any of this, there would be no harm done if it were not that the editorial time spent in preparing it, and publishing costs of printing it, could more properly be devoted to other considerations that are quite ignored in present textual practice. Hardly anyone in textual or bibliographical circles today — with the exception of Professor Leech and now Professor Hoeniger as Editor of the Revels Plays, or I myself as the Editor of the Regents Series — is old-fashioned enough to suggest that an editor ought also to be expected to provide something in the way of commentary of a specifically literary as well as textual kind.

The assumption — unquestioned in the editorial tradition that stretches from Theobald to Herford and Simpson — that an editor is not simply a textual scholar, but a literary scholar as well, has been banished under pressure of the present conception of the editor as bibliographer before he is anything else. The consequence is that a traditionally important share of the editor’s responsibility to his author and to his readers has been abrogated in modern editorial practice. The four volumes of the text of Professor Bowers’ edition of Dekker’s plays will next year be joined, at last, by two volumes of commentary (I have prepared them). The Cambridge Beaumont and Fletcher edition may eventually be provided with volumes of commentary, but with eight more volumes of text to appear, nobody is thinking about that yet. The editors of the Illinois Chapman make it clear, in the General Introduction to the volume of comedies, that “historical and critical commentaries” have no part in the design of their edition, the sole purpose of which is “to establish reliable texts for all of Chapman’s plays.” No one, presumably, can take issue with an aim as laudable as that, and yet to design an edition along such exclusively textual lines is, finally, to undercut its own claims to definitiveness. Noting the inadequacies of the text of Parrott’s edition, the editors of the Illinois Chapman rightly justify the need for a new edition that will take into account the
many and illuminating insights into the textual problem of Chapman's plays that have come to be available during the sixty-odd years since the publication of Parrott's edition. But do not the editors have an equal responsibility to reflect the many and numerous insights into the critical and scholarly problems posed by Chapman's plays which have also come to light over the past sixty years. If Parrott's edition is outmoded textually, it is at least equally outmoded in details of its commentary, where more recent research has extended our knowledge of Chapman's sources and his handling of these, the dates of his plays, his collaboration with other dramatists. In fact, Parrott's edition remains indispensable to the student of Chapman, and I include a student like myself as well as one on the graduate level. Chapman is a difficult dramatist (more difficult in the tragedies, admittedly, than in the comedies), and the Illinois edition, with all its textual virtues, does nothing at all by way of making him accessible to a reader. In this it is merely following a trend, and it is unfair to belabor its example. The same strictures can be leveled against the two volumes which have thus far appeared in the Cambridge Beaumont and Fletcher; the student still needs Dyce, or the four volumes of the variorum for the plays that were included in it.

The importance of analytical bibliography to textual criticism is by now firmly established and familiar; no one denies it, and an editor is nothing without bibliographical expertise sufficient to make him aware of the extent to which the printing process has affected the transmission of the text he is editing. But there are limits to the usefulness of bibliography to the textual scholar, and it is time they were defined. The extravagant claims that twenty years ago were being put forward in support of the view that a thorough-going knowledge of the printing process would provide new and hitherto-unsuspected insights into the transmission of a text, and equip an editor with a wisdom undreamed of by the likes of Bullen and Grosart, have simply not been fulfilled. Hinman's study of the printing and proofreading of the Shakespeare first folio is a monument to the unfulfilled hopes that were once entertained concerning the practical benefits that would accrue to the textual scholar from bibliographical research. For what it tells us about printing house practices in the early seventeenth century, Hinman's study is a monumental piece of work, but its contribution to the practical work of editing Shakespeare is disappointingly slight. The limits of bibliographical usefulness to an editor were suggested years ago, in 1950, by Professor Bowers in an article titled "Some Relations of Bibliography to Editorial Problems," published in the third volume of Studies in Bibliography. I quote from it:

An editor of the literature of the past must have considerable linguistic attainments, or ready access to professional advice. Through long familiarity he must grow to be a native in the characteristic thought, usage, speech patterns, and customs of his period. Although bibliography may occasionally assist in the solution of some problems, or offer a convincing after-the-event confirmation, much emendation — or refusal to emend — much estimate of authenticity, must be made quite independently of bibliographical considerations and instead on a philological basis. This aspect has no relation to bibliography, and it requires a discipline and study which leave little time for bibliographical investigations not concerning the problem immediately at hand. (p. 44)

In view of the editorial practice that has come to be the established thing in the twenty years since Professor Bowers wrote those words, his final sentence is ironic; one might note that editors now have little time for anything except bibliographical investigations, and that
other disciplines (such as the philological) equally crucial to the editor’s work have come to be sadly neglected.

If the balance is not righted, then I am afraid textual criticism is doomed to wither for at least two good reasons. For one thing, — and I do not know how to put this politely so I am not going to try — the best scholars will desert it and leave the field to the hacks. The scholars best equipped to edit Elizabethan plays — those who thoroughly know the dramatic literature of the period, who are experienced in dealing with the philological principles and the verbal idiom of the time, who are experienced as well in the handling of source materials and authorial problems and the complexities of contemporary theatrical history, and in addition to all these scholarly accomplishments are graced with a measure of critical sensitivity and judgment — scholars of this breed are not going to be willing to take on the crushing and prodigiously time-consuming bibliographical labors that the present standards of textual criticism would require of them if they were to engage in editorial assignments on any very large scale. And I see no reason why they should. If they are truly scholars of the breed I have described, they will be prepared to give bibliography its due, but not more than its due, because they will know that they must attend to other responsibilities in the fulfillment of their editorial task. The greatest editors have always known this; McKerrow knew it when he edited Nahse, just as Greg knew it when he prepared the parallel text edition of Marlowe’s Faustus.

The other reason why textual criticism may be doomed to wither in its present state is an economic one. How long are publishers going to be willing, or able, to print the dozens and dozens of pages of historical collations and emendations of accidentals and introductory accounts of the printing process that fill the volumes of the Cambridge Beaumont and Fletcher and the Illinois Chapman and the California Dryden. The texts of the plays in those estimable volumes come to us encased in a bibliographical armor that is virtually impenetrable by any but bibliographers. The cost of printing these volumes is staggering, and may become prohibitive. They are now priced well beyond the average students’ means. (The price of the second volume of the Cambridge Beaumont and Fletcher is $22.50.) A scaling down of the textual apparatus with which the plays of these editions are accompanied ought to be possible, and indeed is possible. But this will require some major re-focusing of our sights with regard to the kinds of bibliographical evidence that the reader of an old-spelling edition ought to have before him, and of the kinds that he ought to be spared. Until this happens, the work of editing Elizabethan plays will drag its slow length along, the plays themselves loaded down with excess bibliographical equipment, as the great editorial projects amble along like so many dinosaurs, headed for extinction.

University of Rochester

Notes

1. Read before the North Central Division of the Renaissance Society of America, Buffalo, New York, on 23 April 1971.


3. In John Beale’s Composers in A King and no King, Q1”, p. 138.


5 "Bibliographical Studies of Chapman's All Fools (1605), Printed by George Eld", Shakespeare Studies (The Shakespeare Society of Japan), III (1964), 73-99. Yamada's findings are noticed by Evans, who does "not think that the spelling evidence, set forth at considerable length by Professor Yamada, warrants postulating more than three compositors" (Evans, op. cit., p. 228, n. 6.).


8 Professor Bowers' Marlowe is promised us by the Cambridge University Press, and an old-spelling Shakespeare is being assembled for publication by the University of South Carolina Press.